

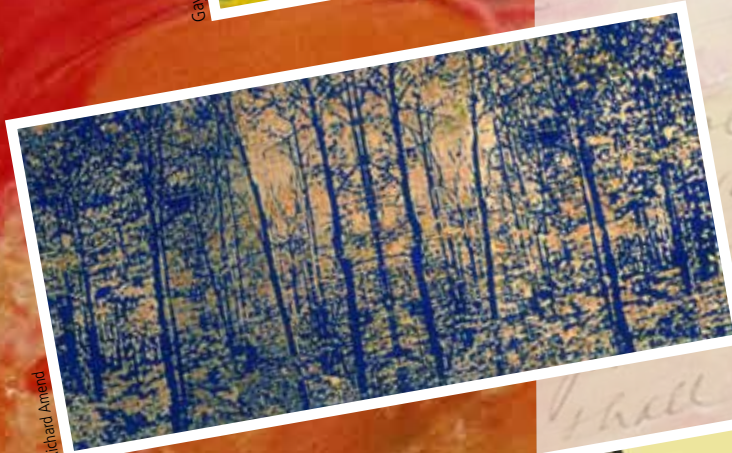
# Art Tales

A Unique Contest  
for Creative Writers

## 2013 Contest Winners



Gayel Childress



Richard Amend



Sherry Loehr



Gail Pridluck



Hiroko Yoshimoto



Dorothy Hunter

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**VENTURA**  
PARKS, RECREATION &  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS  
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**Fifth Annual**

# **Art Tales**

**A Unique Contest for  
Creative Writers**

The City of Ventura is pleased to sponsor, in partnership with E.P. Foster Library, a creative contest for local writers. The competition invites writers to submit an original short story or poem that was inspired by one of the Municipal Art Collection works of art currently on exhibit on the second floor of the E.P. Foster Library in downtown Ventura.

In an effort to make the City's art collection more accessible to the community, the City of Ventura joined with E.P. Foster Library to provide an exhibit space for a limited number of works, which are rotated annually. Each piece in this year's assortment of artwork challenges the viewer to puzzle over the work's meaning and provides an excellent opportunity for students and adults alike to exhibit their written skills while learning about viewing works of art. This contest is a call for imaginative and inventive people to examine a work of art and then write a short story or poem reflecting their unique interpretation.

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## **Mojave**

**By Dahyun Na**

Another wrinkle next to my eye  
Disturbance under my misty, barren surface  
Remembering my past  
My heart not yet fully healed  
Bubbling with confusion of mixed colors  
Forced into one place  
Like oil and water that never seem to mix  
Red love for my home  
Red passion for my tribe  
Orange liveliness in traditions from my ancestors  
Orange fascination in growth of my children  
Green joy in peaceful, repeated daily routine  
  
Orange warning for strangers who harm Mother Nature  
Red rage toward invaders who took away my home  
Dark blue powerlessness like falling through an endless  
tunnel with no exit  
Orange loneliness in a new environment without my family  
Yellow hope for the return of my old life  
Perplexities under my smooth surface  
Living my life with memories, carrying the past

*Inspired by "Mojave," c. 1986, oil on paper, Dorothy Hunter*



Richard Amend

## **Blue Trees**

**by Nadia Connelly**

Soft sunshine shines  
through our branches.  
The soft grass sways  
as if dancing in the wind.

The sun is as brilliant  
as a bonfire in the sky.  
Silver deer gallop so fast  
it is as if they are flying.

Wicked smiles are carved  
onto our trunks.  
We are the keepers  
of the forest.

Squirrels scamper  
quickly up our trunks  
tickling us  
with their big, bushy tails.

The sound of lonely bird cries  
echo off us  
filling the silent forest  
with sound.

The smell of crisp leaves  
fills our noses.  
The hot sun shines  
and makes us warm.

But the soft whispery wind  
sings its song  
and cools us  
charming every animal.

If we are quiet  
you can hear  
every animal's heart beating.  
We are all united.

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*



Gayel Childress

## First Place: Youth Fiction

### The City in Color

By Sofia Felino

Anna snapped her hands nervously together, then folded them out and spun them around to keep the anxiety from clouding over her. Sometimes it worked, and sometimes it made it worse.

The waiting room was full of people much older than herself. Anna had just turned 24, and she was already having "old problems". She feverishly started twisting her strawberry-blond hair, as the hand-clap pattern had failed her this time.

The elevator door opened in the hallway, and soon, a tall man about Anna's age strolled through the door. He had dark, slick hair and icy blue eyes with a falcon's nose.

"Got a problem?"

Anna quickly snapped her eyes back. "No, no," she stuttered. "Nothing."

"I'm Thayer. So what are you in for?"

Anna looked away. Raindrops slipped off the window like tears on a cheek, as she subconsciously fell back into her hand-clap pattern.

"You don't want to say?" he asked. "Fine, I won't either."

"Anna Wilcox?" Dr. Montgomery called from the door.

The anxiety swallowed Anna as she tried to stand up, but her knees buckled and she toppled over onto the prim glass coffee table.

The Anna could feel the tension in the room. It felt like the Wizard of Oz, where the girl walks into a world full of color, but in reverse. She saw everything, heard everything, felt everything, but there was nothing she could do but let the color bleed from her world.

Usually after she had one of these attacks,

color would slowly fade back into her life, but not tonight. It couldn't have just been the anticipation of the test results. It wasn't even her failing heart.

Anna stepped up to the hallway and stroked the peeling blue wallpaper. She wrapped her red pea coat around herself, as if it was a protective shield. She glanced at the faded photograph, lying in its unfinished frame, like an unvisited grave. The tears pushed their way out of her tired eyes. She was a tiny baby, left alone in a broken down crib, with no one to watch over her.

Except someone was watching her. Thayer's Prius had never left her gravelly driveway. He slowly puffed tiny threads of air out his mouth, his calming exercise. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't.

He looked at Anna's tiny house, thinking it was probably time to go. Then he thought of Anna, the poor broken down girl, who probably didn't have anyone to come home to, quite like himself. He knew he'd never get to sleep anyway, he may as well watch over a panicking stranger.

The next morning, Anna's red eyes burned as they opened. The memory of last night's dream sizzled in her memory. She hadn't had that dream since...she stared at the old photograph as she climbed up. A pier, a tall building, tall trees, all in beautiful lively color. She knew it meant she was submerging from out of the woods, and into the daylight. The test, and those two rays of light pushing through the window. It was all going to fit together.

She smiled into the dusty mirror. Then, closing her tired eyes, she saw it: the city in color.

*Inspired by "Ventura Pier and the Holiday Inn," 1989, collage and acrylic, Gayel Childress*



Dorothy Hunter

## **Paradise**

**by Rachel Chang**

Falling into a hole wasn't my idea. It all started when I was exploring the Mojave Desert. Suddenly, my legs began to spin. I started to run, running faster by each second. But I wasn't controlling it. It was a wild roller coaster. Then my legs stopped. Since I was so confused, yet excited, I didn't realize soon enough that I was falling into a dark abyss. It was like a waterfall, but with rapid sand. The hole was calling my name, and using mysterious fingers to pull me in. I couldn't escape; I began to fall.

I opened my eyes to the goofy grin of an old man. He had a long white beard and wore a bright pink toga. He grabbed my shoulders and stared in amazement.

"It's time you come, Emma Sparks. Welcome to the island of Crystopa," the old man cooed immaturely. He took a small bottle out of his sleeve. "This is the Potion of Mastery. Pour it on anything and it will follow your command," he winked. Suddenly, his smile faded. He started gasping for air. With his final breath, he screamed, "They're coming!" Then he collapsed into the sand.

I ran to the nearest people. "A man just had a heart attack!" But when I turned around, the old man had vanished. In his place was the Potion of Mastery. I quickly slipped it into my pocket.

"Where's he?" a girl asked.

"He was right here!"

"You probably just imagined it," the girl giggled. "I'm Kristina," she pointed to a boy next to her, "That's Ryder."

"I'm Emma." I briefly explained how I wasn't from Crystopa.

They stared at each other. "No, it can't be," Kristina whispered to Ryder. She looked scared. Ryder told me to follow him to a large tree.

"Put your hand on the heart of the tree," Ryder murmured.

When I placed my palm onto the middle of the tree, my hand began to glow. All of a sudden, we were surrounded by glittering pools of water. Each one had a small sign: Fountain of love, power, nature, beauty, etc. There were hundreds of them.

"The Fountains of Desire: if a single drop of the water touches you, you'll turn into the item on the sign. According to the Great Myth, the first person from the Outer World to seek Crystopa will destroy our enemy, Man. You're the hero, Emma. Man's evil is killing nature and Mother Earth," Kristina explained.

I understood. The evil was causing Global Warming, pollution, poaching animals, cutting trees, and destroying the earth. Suddenly, there was a piercing gunshot. It was the evil of Man destroying Crystopa. I had only a couple seconds. I checked my pockets for any useful items: the Potion of Mastery. I poured the liquid into the pool marked as nature. Just as the evil approached, I yelled, "Rain!"

The fierce men turned into daisies; I looked around. There were numerous trees, playful animals, nature, and our definition of paradise.



Richard Amend

## **Lost in the Shadows**

**By Hana Vrablik**

I continued on wearily as the teasing red sun quickly slipped behind the trees. I called her name once, then again and again.

"Charlotte!"

My voice rang out loud and clear, yet still there wasn't an answer. I tried again.

This time, my voice interrupted the peaceful mountains that watched over me and the blue trees. I've always loved those trees, the way they turned blue in the shadows of the setting sun.

But today they were abrasive. They stood in my way as I frantically looked around for my lost, little cousin.

"Char-LOTTE!" I cried out desperately.

I had told Charlotte not to hide in the woods! If only we hadn't played our "hide-and-go-seek" game in the first place, this terrible incident wouldn't have happened.

I sat down against the tree. I ran my fingers along the thin, white bark. For once that day, I felt peaceful and calm. There was a gentle breeze, the air smelled of vegetation, and I could hear the occasional chirps of birds as they settled down to rest. The day was near its end, for the trees were turning blue, as I sat in their long, dark, shadows.

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*





Richard Amend

## **I Heard the Talking Trees**

**By Nicole Bellmore**

I heard the talking trees.

The orange sunset lit the forest  
and the lush grass rippled with the breeze.

Then all at once it stopped.

I heard only my own heavy breaths  
until a creak! then a crack!

The branches rustled and leaves slapped.

I felt no wind nor saw a storm,  
only the trees shook.

The stiff grass shook and bushes stilled  
while the trees chattered.

Each one had a voice unique to itself.

One would thump another would rustle.

A tall one sang in high pitched squeals.

Another one bellowed with waving branches  
while dark leaves flew through the sky.

Suddenly everything halted. I heard the talking  
trees

I saw the dark sky  
where the moon now dimly lit the forest.

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*



Dorothy Hunter

## **A haiku: Cut then Burn**

**By Breanna Wheeler**

Dance in the hot sun  
In a sense, sleeping past death  
Scorched by nakedness

*Inspired by "Mojave," c. 1986, oil on paper, Dorothy Hunter*



## **The Girl Called Eleanor**

**By Marissa Roberts**

I watch the leaves fall straight through the world  
The tree trunks sway like dancing little girls  
And then everything comes alive  
Light slips through the trees like tears from my eyes  
I just want to reach for the top of the trees  
But as I lift up my arm I finally find peace  
I curl up in a ball and just lose my mind  
I was tricked by the trees too many times

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*

## **A Thousand Ways**

**By Kienna Kulzer**



Richard Amend

There are a thousand ways to die.

She wasn't sure where the phrase had come from, but she liked it. She tried to list them once, beginning with the ordinary ones: car accident, cancer, the all-encompassing "old age"; as the list grew, she had to be more creative: a tsunami, a poisonous mushroom, crushed under a falling street sign. She got to 216 before she gave up and decided the ways were countless, the endeavor pointless. And she forgot about it for a couple years, the morbid fascination fading to the back of her mind, resurfacing only in the occasional realizations most everyone experiences when standing near the edge of a high place or driving on a windy road: one step, one turn of the wheel...

It was spring when it reappeared. No sudden epiphany, just a soft whisper that grew more and more conspicuous, until it became a constant background hum in her everyday thoughts. Apathy was her self-diagnosis. Somewhere in the endless tedious routine of school and practice, indifference overwhelmed her; it numbed the loneliness and overpowered any trace of fervor within her. She almost wished for something tragic to happen. Feeling something-absolutely anything at all- would be better than the never-ending apathy. Sleep, when it came, was always brief and restless, littered with nightmares that had her sweating and heart pounding when she woke. She began to look forward to the night, when her family was asleep

and the house was quiet and the world seemed to belong to only her.

They lived on the edge of the small town, their backyard separated from the woods by a fence. She would hop over it every night after everyone was asleep, and wander around among the tall silent trees, their trunks a ghostly blue in the moonlight. At first she treated them as friends, but even that was too lonely. They were too silent.

There are a thousand ways to die. The phrase popped into her mind again in the forest in the early morning, just as the dawn was approaching. She had never been there at quite that time. She liked the phrase, liked its sound and its rhythm. She rolled the words across her tongue a few more times. Suddenly, its antithesis was there too, unsettling and alarming. There are a thousand ways to live. It didn't have the same smooth, steady rhythm. It was bubbly and light. It had a refreshing vitality to it; she couldn't get it out of her head.

She had always dreaded morning, the alarming dawn seeping in to drown the night, but this time she lingered long enough to watch. The dawn was flooding the forest now, the gold pouring in through the shadowed trees; it was bold, inviting, intoxicating. And when she stood to go, she ran. A thousand ways to live. A new phrase, a new list. And with lungs aching, cheeks stinging, breathing heavy, eyes watering, she began to count.

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*



### Look Away, Wet Paint

By Grace O'Toole



Dorothy Hunter

It's hard to look him in the eyes on the good days.

On the bad, it's not even worth trying.

The accusing blue gaze condemns you, what you have done, what you have made yourself into. It's like a spotlight on your self-hatred, your willingness to let... to let...

You stare up at the moldy ceiling, a moth eaten, thin, ragged excuse for a blanket bunched up under your head as a pillow, and count the seconds as they go by.

You grit your teeth and cast your gaze to your shaking hands, white knuckled, around the battered purple toothbrush; to the chipped sides of the sink, to the damp that never gets out of the ceiling. Anything and everything. Except at him.

It's been ages since you've even given a hint of recognition that he exists. The world is monochrome and grey, and you welcome it gladly. Anything to take your mind off of the danger that lurks every time you enter the one other room in your space in the tiny, dingy motel. After the world crashed and burned and then, surprising everybody, settled down again, you didn't have much motivation to go anywhere else.

You look up one day on accident and smash your fist into his face with all your pent up anger and resentment. Your knuckles come out worse for the wear, slashed up and bloody, red streaking down the side of his face, pale and shocked. You run out and grab a can of white paint, rushing back in and slapping a thick, white coat over the angry expression, catching a glimpse of the accusing blue cutting a path straight into your head.

The small room is dank and dirty with disuse. The open window lets in the slightest of breezes. A body, curled up and forlorn, shivers on top of a mattress that is too uncomfortable to be called a mattress. A door creaks slightly with the flow of air, exposing the interior of a miserable white-washed room. The only color in the room is on the wall. It's a shattered mirror, covered in thick streaks of what looks like wet white paint around the edges and a splotch of vivid red near the center, the color diffusing to an orangish pink that reach to the side of the frame and drip down to the sink.

The red drips down to the floor, and a single blue eye peers out of the mirror.

*Inspired by "Mojave," c. 1986, oil on paper, Dorothy Hunter*

# Mourning

By Monica Boedigheimer



Richard Amend

Chaser, Geoffrey S. did not know where he was. Or, for a brief moment in the worst of the pounding headache, who he was. He especially did not know how he got where he was. Who was he again? Ah, right. Chaser, Geoffrey S.

Because Chaser, Geoffrey S. could have been Albert, or Scott, if not for the ID with a strange picture of a smiling mid-30s man born on September 28, 1980.

He clutched that card like a lifeline, surveying his surroundings. On one side, burning wreckage, smoldering, hazy....

*The flight attendant was still acting calm. How could that be when the two people dearest to him were in peril, scared, screaming for him to act – but what could he do?*

On the other side, wilderness was responding to the tragedy. Birds were chirping their laments; the smoke choked the trees, turning them blue. It was almost peaceful until Geoffrey's boots began crunching, faster and faster, out of the smoke, away from those memories.

*Daddy!*

No, no....he was sprinting, a wild creature, adrenaline his fuel, fear his motive.

*Brace for impact.*

Was it the trees, or his own skin, ash-covered, scarred, that bore down on him?

*You'll be alright.*

No, it was a solid rock wall, covered in lichen, impenetrable, a challenge he could not face – it would be the victor.

He pounded on the wall, clawed until his nails peeled off, threw his wallet at it. Pathetic against

this stubborn force, it fell to the ground, his lifeline snapped. He squinted into the sun. It was bright... too bright. The particle-filled air was clearing, the trees thin, exposing him.

Then he saw them, a young girl, eyes the palest blue, long curls swirling around her angelic face, laughing with a woman who embraced her daughter, a woman with the slightest wrinkles under those fairy eyes. They were on top of the cliff, beckoning to him. "Come join us!" they called. I wish I could, he called back...out loud? He wasn't sure.

Search and rescue flew through the trees still blue with mourning, as if they were nothing foreign. They inhaled the throttling fog with no reaction in their lungs. This was their job. The underbrush gave way to their stampede, their crunching and crashing through the wood's commemorative moment.

"Who is he?" They asked when they found the body. A short, stocky man spotted the wallet and picked it up, wiping the blood from the laminate.

"Chaser, Geoffrey S." He announced. He looked from the wallet, to its position relative to the wall. Tracing upwards, he found strips of lichen torn away, dots of red among the yellow-green. "Looks like he tried to climb that rock." Briefly he glanced into the sunlight, then continued examining the wallet.

"Why?" The others scoffed. The one with the wallet pulled out a worn picture of a beautiful family of three. He returned his gaze to the top of the cliff, the sky now clear of soot, sun clear and warm, and smiled.

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*

## **Return of the Firebird**

**By T.M. Göttl**

Firefall tongues at the edge of tsunamis  
swallow the innocence of gulls—  
white like Danube snowdrops,  
white like tears and pain,  
white like salvation with a slit throat, bloodied street-side—  
until they rise from the rusty waves,  
gulls no more but the scorched, soot-black phoenix,  
heavy with embers sluicing from their claws.

In the phlegmatic humors—  
a memorized school statistic  
of seventy-percent water—  
the people dig a skin-shaped burrow,  
a clothing of fog and dirt and greasy comforts,  
a tepid, keep-your-head-down hibernation.  
Kick no stones down empty druid wells,  
curl, fold, and crease a surrendered lampshade  
too weak to open light gates  
onto a cathedraled ceiling,  
forget all things of fire.  
Sleep with bleary-cloaked hearts,  
with bleary-blanketed minds,  
with bleary-masked eyes,  
hidden behind waste and clutter.  
Forget the dragon's skull of lucky, flaming wings.  
Forget the angel, feathered red and green  
with three pairs of wings and three faces,  
slashing the burning sword of light against  
demons of cold and muddy ash.  
Forget the way fire dances,  
in the way the people learned to dance:  
sometimes slow and deliberate,  
sometimes jumping and fearful.

Stop this forgetting.  
Recall harvesting the scales of flying snakes of fire—  
scales shed into sun-dry ocean and river basins,  
basins filled with scales of every flame-color—  
green, yellow, red, blue.  
The people of the ocean that was  
danced as they'd learned from torches and cook fires,  
stamped and circled all night and all day,  
danced the serpent scales into soft grains of heat and sun.  
Fire sand burned their feet and faces,  
and they never forgot  
how to dance like a cook fire.

Cleanse the heart, eyes, and mind  
of watery cocoons and layers of dust,  
cleanse the sins of comfort and grease.  
Become a lava-bellied fiend,  
scratching meteors trails across the ozone.  
Remember the violence of blistered skin,  
the mirrored air of a flame-quenched summer.

The firebird means the people must die.  
The people must wake with blue infant eyes  
crying through hot blood and quick air.  
The people must dream.  
The people must dance.  
The people must burn.



*Inspired by "Mojave," c. 1986, oil on paper, Dorothy Hunter*

## **This Dance**

**By Steve Brightman**

There is  
no way to  
do this with  
quiet dignity.

There is  
no way to  
escape this  
unwieldy  
struggle,  
this dance  
of atlas in  
reverse.

There is  
no way to  
survive  
our fruitless  
embarrassments  
on our own.

There is  
only clumsy  
distribution  
of weight and  
a handful of  
shared sideways  
steps toward  
the dying sun.



Gail Pidduck

*Inspired by "Two Men and a Pumpkin," 2003, oil on canvas, Gail Pidduck*



## Third Place: Adult Poetry



Richard Amend

### Navigating by Starlight

By Kimbrough Ernest

If on a jeweled night,  
a swimmer,  
or a man with a canoe,  
navigated a tangled waterway  
of doubt and deliberation,  
rowed beyond  
the mire and the murk,  
and farther on,  
out into a clearing of some kind,  
found a moment  
perhaps  
when he could lift up oars  
and float there  
in the light  
of his own understanding,  
would it be too much to say  
that his journey was good,  
or good enough?

Would it be too much to say,  
or too little?

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*

## **Former Friends and Passerby**

**By Joni Porter**



Richard Amend

Elsa sat motionless in the passenger's seat of her mother's car, barely breathing. They turned down a familiar street and a monotonous stare let out the car window. Trees moved by sending whispers of judgment back and forth like old high school friends. They recognized Elsa was going home as she sat staring blankly out of the car window. To be recognized by the trees was no surprise; neither of them had changed much, each aging with the other. Inside she was becoming dull. For years this hasn't been her real home. There was no magic here, nothing to make her feel alive. Home was a different place now. This place was a time capsule, surreal and replaying the same scenes again and again. The whole town was under some eerie spell which kept anyone or anything from ever changing. It made Elsa uneasy. Nearing the final destination, she closed her eyes tightly, pulling herself back to that place where she felt alive.

The scenery faded into the black background of her eyelids. Feeling of life came back slowly, first as a seed sewn deep in her heart. The seed was alive and beating and it gave a sense of hope and freedom. Next was the sound of his voice telling jokes, stories and sweet nothings. Something about the playfulness of his jokes warmed her. She yearned to feel the softness of his face again and the seed began to grow, its roots pushing at the walls of her heart and growing it four times its size. She held onto the sensations of life, happiness and love just long enough to build herself a fresh memory before an almost perverse feeling swept over her, forcing her to let go.

As the orange light came back through her eyelids she began to grasp the car door. The vinyl felt cold and empty under her hand. It killed her inside to face the reality of revisiting her childhood home. They slowed to finally turn down the long driveway. The closer they came to greeting the others inside, the larger the empty pit in Elsa's stomach grew, fed by the assumptions and accusations of her former tree friends. As they continued to pass by, memories of this past life flooded and overwhelmed her. She is left to only clench onto the fast-fading memory that is her current home, far away from this one. This memory would have to play over and over, offering fleeting moments of relief until she could be there again. As the driveway widened at the end, her mother parked the car. Elsa closed her eyes, took one last deep breath and wore a smile as she felt the burning stares of the surrounding trees follow her inside.

*Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend*

## Second Place: Adult Fiction

### The Ventura Pier at Sunset

By Valerie Lynn Pike



The Ventura Pier at sunset is like an iguana that can change its colors. Everyone will agree that at sunset, the blue sky is so vibrant and vivid! The waves reflect a sapphire blue. The impressive and usually green palm trees change to a bright shade of crimson. So, if you find yourself needing to relieve some stress, come to this fascinating spot in Ventura.

The landscape is multicolored, just as the collage and acrylic by Gayle Childress. You can warm up in the sun, enjoy the palm trees, and breathe the ocean air. Come check out the sunset at the Holiday Inn, which is absolutely radiant! You can breathe in the salt air and feel the mist from the ocean waves from your balcony on a bench. You can hear the crashing of the waves, which blends in with the banging of the congas.

It inspired me, Valerie Lynn Pike, to write this story about the elegant and eye-catching view of the Ventura Pier at sunset, because I felt connected to the exquisite bright colors! If there is ever a day you feel colorless, drab, dreary, or plain, please stop by and enjoy the colorful view at the Ventura Pier. Where you can find peace, gazing at the lavender blue and indigo sky, which has the potential of bringing a smile on your face! The presence of a lamppost is there to bring you back home again after the shiny day and an object that looks like a fish making bubbles to go along with the ocean theme. The surfers have put up their surf boards.

You can enjoy a cup of coffee at an outside cafe as you chat with some locals and watch people riding bikes and perhaps have a fun conversation with an adventurous tourist who is immersed into a new place. It must have been a bright, sunny California Day when the artist was a spectator herself! It makes me wish I would have had the pleasure of painting this magnificent piece of art!

*Inspired by "Ventura Pier and the Holiday Inn," 1989, collage and acrylic, Gayle Childress*

## **Bird Song**

**By Maggie Westland**

Oh

What a tale

This is in juxtapose

A tiny woman placed

So perilously, a bird of prey

Who prays for her to wake

As waves of sound surround

Reverberate in arcs of ink

A bower bird admires his lady love

A postal card kept near to nest

A lush of fruit, if we could only

Sing the song she plays

The bird repeats

We'd know what note

Began the growth of

Tree, filled up the

Throat



## **Bittersweet**

**By Diana Blackburn**

Three-note minor key

Among bittersweet berries

One little green bird

Like feeling your lost kisses

Like holding your photograph

*Inspired by "Green Bird at La Posada," 2002, oil on canvas, Sherry Loehr*



## Found

By Rich Preneuf

*Es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido*  
– Pablo Neruda



Found  
in a used book store  
Love: Ten Poems

The bookmark  
for the saddest lines:  
a dried yellow rose

Love is so short  
and forgetting  
is so long

The pressed flower  
crumbles into tiny flakes  
of gold leaf

And begs the question:  
what the reader  
wanted to remember

Love cut  
short or  
that final touch?

*Inspired by "Yellow Rose for Teiko II," 1999, pastel, charcoal and 22K gold leaf on paper, Hiroko Yoshimoto*

The following five artists' work were the inspiration for this year's Art Tales. They are part of the City of Ventura's Municipal Art Collection on display at Ventura City Hall.

### **Richard Amend** (b.1949)

*Blue Trees*, 2001, mixed media/rice paper.

There is stillness, the capturing of a singular moment, and a particular quality of light that challenges Richard Amend in his creative process. The artist says of his work, "These are intensely observed yet detached views of moments in psychological time." A career in the film industry has enabled Richard to travel widely, and in the process of photographing sites for various cinematic projects, he found new opportunity for exploring expressionistic pattern painting. Crossings and points of passage are somewhat thematic; windows, doorways, road crossings, and openings in the forest are recurrent elements in his work.

Possessing a Masters degree in Fine Arts, Richard Amend has exhibited his work nationally and internationally in Milan, Italy, Los Angeles, as well as in Ventura County. He has received numerous commercial awards, and prestigious corporate and private commissions in New York, Los Angeles and in Europe.

### **Gayel Childress** (b. 1940)

*Ventura Pier and the Holiday Inn*, 1989, collage and acrylic.

Award winning Ojai artist Gayel Childress works in diverse media and is known for her innovative use of color and her energetic flair for experimentation. Her goal, she says, is to capture the spirit of a subject. Through the treatment of her subject matter,

which can range widely from landscape to figurative to still life to abstract, she exhibits a skillful and dynamic sense of color and design and reveals her characteristic sense of whimsy.

Childress, who actively supports artists and arts organizations has exhibited widely and her work is represented in collections throughout the US and Europe. She is a member of the Gold Coast Watercolor Society and a founding member of the Ojai Studio Artists.

### **Dorothy Hunter** (b. 1929)

*Mojave*, c.1986, oil on paper

Dorothy Hunter, originally from Maryland, describes her current artwork as "abstract impressionism," but this characterization comes as the result of a long artistic evolution. Her early work was comprised mostly of realistic watercolor landscapes, but then she shifted to oils while retaining key watercolor techniques, such as thinning her oil paint into semi-transparent washes. This interest in delicate transparencies was reinforced during her years living in Okinawa.

Hunter, who is almost entirely self-taught, drew influence from the work of American Modernists Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. Although her work then made a transition to abstract, her primary inspiration remained the landscapes of nature and the variations of season, weather, and light. Her creative process demands a free subconscious, and starting with a general feeling of color and form, she then lets the painting take its own course. "I become a tool which manipulates the brush, while some other force within me creates the painting. It is a very mystical experience."

Her paintings have hung in many prestigious venues, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC, and the Smithsonian. Since coming to Ventura in 1984 she has exhibited at the Carnegie Museum, the Buenaventura Art Association and was recently honored as a featured artist for the Focus on the Masters Tuesday Talk Series.

### **Sherry Loehr** (b. 1948)

**Green Bird at La Posada**, 2002, *acrylic on canvas*.

This award-winning painter is best known for a remarkable aesthetic style she calls "Contemporary Realism." Sherry Loehr employs a unique approach to the traditional still life by creating fascinating background patterns achieved through stenciling, collage, and texturing. These imaginative backgrounds provide an exquisitely modern contrast to the classic realism of the painting's subject, creating a rich and dramatic visual feast. Loehr's special techniques and work have been featured in national art magazines such as *Southwest Art Magazine*, *The Artist's Magazine* and books on water media such as *The Complete Best of Watercolor* by Schlemm.

Sherry Loehr, who lives and works in Ojai, found inspiration for *Green Bird at La Posada* while walking past the Posada Hotel in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she was struck by the beauty of a branch of crab apples. She also notes that Posada comes from the word "posa," meaning "well," a place people gather to refresh themselves. "I think that art too functions this way, giving people an opportunity to pause and refresh themselves." Sherry Loehr earned a BFA degree in English and Art from the University of Colorado and an MA in Art Education from Columbia University. She is a signature member of the National Watercolor Society and the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society. Loehr has won many awards including "Best in Show" for the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society's 1995 exhibition, and three consecutive "First Place" awards for the Annual Buenaventura Art Association Juried Competition. Her work was also included as part of the National Watercolor Society's traveling exhibition.

### **Gail Pidduck** (b. 1950)

**Two Men and a Pumpkin**, 2003, *oil on canvas*.

Gail Pidduck thinks of herself as a ruralist painter. She believes her childhood on a citrus ranch in Santa Paula and employment, in her youth, by Burpee Seed Company greatly influenced her work as an artist.

Pidduck holds a deep appreciation for the croplands and open spaces of a rural setting. Although she is also known for her portraits and still lifes, her most recent focus has been to create plein aire paintings depicting the California she knows, one that honors the landscapes and people of Ventura County's agricultural environment. The painting *Two Men and a Pumpkin* sprang from this inspiration.

Pidduck, who holds a BA in art from Brigham Young University, has exhibited her work nationally in several group and solo shows, including the esteemed Museum of Ventura County. She is also the recipient of many awards, including Best in Show for the City of Thousand Oaks Annual Art Show and a first place award in the Santa Paula Art Show. Her highly sought-after work can be found in private and public collections throughout the nation.

### **Hiroko Yoshimoto** (b. 1943)

**Yellow Rose for Teiko II**, 1999,  
*pastel, charcoal, and 22K gold leaf on paper*.

Throughout her career, artist and teacher Hiroko Yoshimoto has explored the relationship between intangible thoughts and feelings and tangible, visual forms. *Yellow Rose for Teiko II* is part of Yoshimoto's "Offering Series." The yellow rose is representative of the artist's late mother and symbolizes "farewell." Gold-leaf drawings permeate the "Offering Series," with their flat shapes referencing medieval altars for prayer offerings.

Possessing a Master's Degree in art with honors from UCLA, Yoshimoto continues the teaching tradition as an art instructor at Ventura College. Yoshimoto has received numerous awards and exhibited her work internationally in museums and galleries including the Ventura County Museum of History and Art and the Tokyo Municipal Art Space in Japan. Works by Yoshimoto can be found in international institutional and private collections.

*The City of Ventura*

# Municipal *Art* Collection

In May of 1999, the City Council established the Municipal Art Acquisition Program to document the history of visual art in Ventura through the annual purchase of important works of art created by area artists. The collection provides increased access to art of the highest quality and of distinctive merit through its display in the public areas of City Hall and other municipal buildings. Featured artworks must be created by artists residing in Ventura County or who have made a direct contribution to the history of art in Ventura County.

The Municipal Art Acquisition Committee, a sub-committee of the Public Art Commission, oversees the purchase of works in a variety of artistic media. The Public Art Commission plans to expand the collection in future years.

Ventura's Municipal Art Collection is exhibited in City Hall, 501 Poli Street, in the downtown Cultural District during regular business hours, closed alternate Fridays.

For more information visit  
[www.cityofventura.net/publicart](http://www.cityofventura.net/publicart) or call 805/658-4793.



Carol Rosenak



Teal Rowe



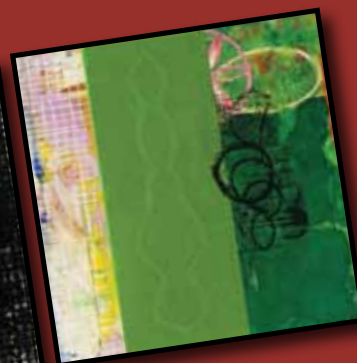
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